

## - Solitary Gardens -

April 30, 2020

Revolutionary Greetings! I pray and I hope that all of you are doing well in the midst of this worldwide pandemic. I know that many are finding it hard to shelter in place for such an extended time, all I can say is that I empathize and I feel your pain.

I have been thinking about the garden over these past few months, and wondering how it would fare through pandemic conditions. It looks like all my worrying was for naught. I was recently informed that the garden is doing just fine, and that students and volunteers have been watering and weeding the garden on a routine basis.

I was told that one of the students not only tends to the garden, but that she uses the structure as a place to sit, meditate, do homework, and think about how she can be in solidarity with the people on the inside.

When Jackie Sumell asked me if I wanted to be a Solitary Gardener, this is what I envisioned. It warms my heart to know that the

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project is affecting people, and that people are beginning to imagine a landscape without prisons.

I have been seeing reports about how the pandemic, the shelter in place order, and social distancing have been causing cabin fever, depression and loneliness.

As someone who has spent over 21 years in punitive / solitary confinement, I know that loneliness all too well. In fact, I promise to write an essay on this very matter so that people can better understand why it is that Jackie Semell fights so hard to end solitary confinement and abolish prisons.

Speaking of loneliness, visits are still suspended statewide with no end in sight. This pains me because I really look forward to visiting with my Solitary Garden team, and my "IAS" family. Visits are not only humanizing, but they help mitigate the effects of solitary confinement. Me personally, I find that solitary confinement and long term incarceration cause antisocial behavior and the eroding of one's social skills.

I am human, and I know that solitary confinement and long term incarceration have robbed me of many things, and in many ways; but with each visit I receive, I am made more whole.

I would like to say thank you! Thank you to Rachel, Jackie, Jocelyn and all those who have taken time out of their busy lives to come and visit with me. Your humanity is integral to my growth.

With Love & Respect,  
Tim Young